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SUBJECT: ASTOP: JAPAN'S RESPONSE TO RUSSIA'S PARTICIPATION  
IS LUKEWARM

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11. On April 17, ESToff spoke with MOFA Principal Deputy Director, Non-Proliferation, Science and Nuclear Energy Division Kaoru Magosaki, concerning Russian participation in ASTOP. Magosaki informed ESToff that Russian Minister Counsellor Galizin visited MOFA on March 7 to appeal to the Japanese government on behalf of Russia. However, GOJ is lukewarm to the prospect. Magosaki believes that Russia may not be a constructive partner. He cited three main reasons.

a. Displeased with performance at multilateral forums: At a recent PSI meeting in Montreal, Russia objected to discussing Res. 1718, which is an important issue to Japan. Magosaki said that Japan cannot welcome a country into ASTOP, which refuses to address critical issues affecting Japan's political and social landscape.

b. Official reports of ASTOP meetings are distributed: Japan is willing to share reports of ASTOP meetings with Russian counterparts. Therefore there is no need for Russia to attend. ASTOP is a framework to enhance dialogue, not a decision-making body. (NOTE: In the past, MOFA did not issue an official report of the meetings. However, last year, due to China's urging, a report was drafted. With interest in these meetings increasing, it is likely that a formal report will be made available to all interested parties.)

c. Non-Asian countries may overshadow ASTOP's objectives: Magosaki stated that although Canada and New Zealand were invited to participate in ASTOP in 2007, it is too early to consider further expansion because discussion could be diluted if too many non-Asian countries attend.

12. Although Russia has a long-history of nuclear experience, intelligence and analysis capabilities, MOFA stated that it is premature to consider inviting Russia as a partner. However, if Russia changes its posture on Res. 1718 in multilateral forums, then Japan may be willing to consider bringing Russia into ASTOP. Magosaki concluded the conversation by stating that Japan looks forward to a response from Washington on its views.  
SCHIEFFER